DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 036 259 HE 001 300

AUTHOR ROTH, DARLENE
TITLE GRADUATE STUDENTS AND ACADEMIC AFFAIRS.
INSTITUTION COUNCIL OF GRADUATE SCHOOLS IN THE U.S., WASHINGTON, D.C.
PUB DATE 5 DEC 69
NOTE 10P.; ADDRESS TO THE NINTH ANNUAL MEETING OF THE COUNCIL OF GRADUATE SCHOOLS IN THE U.S., WASHINGTON D.C., DEC 4-6, 1969

EDRS PRICE EDRS PRICE MF-$0.25 HC-$0.60
DESCRIPTORS DECISION MAKING, *GOVERNANCE, *GRADUATE STUDENTS, *GRADUATE STUDY, *HIGHER EDUCATION, *STUDENT PARTICIPATION, STUDENT ROLE, STUDENT TEACHER RELATIONSHIP

ABSTRACT

THE PARTICIPATION OF GRADUATE STUDENTS IN ACADEMIC DECISION MAKING IS NOT ONLY DESIRABLE, BUT NECESSARY AND INEVITABLE. THE MOMENTUM OF THE REFORMS AT THE UNDERGRADUATE LEVEL IS NOW CARRYING OVER TO GRADUATE SCHOOLS. STUDENTS NO LONGER CONSIDER GRADUATE EDUCATION A PRIVILEGE, BUT A RIGHT TO ADVANCED TRAINING AND TO SOMETHING BESIDE A "WORTHLESS" DEGREE. THEY WANT INVOLVEMENT, AND THE OPPORTUNITY TO ESTABLISH NEW CRITERIA FOR EDUCATIONAL PROFESSIONALISM, WHICH EMPHASIZE THE QUALITY OF TEACHING AND SERVICE TO SCHOOL AND COMMUNITY. LONG A FRAGMENTIZED GROUP, GRADUATE STUDENTS ARE NOW ORGANIZING TO IMPROVE THEIR POSITION. THE FACULTY IS GENERALLY MORE CONCERNED WITH PUBLISHING AND CONSULTING THAN WITH TEACHING, AND THEIR LOYALTY IS NOT TO THE STUDENT OR UNIVERSITY, BUT TO THE OUTSIDE WORLD. AS A RESULT, STUDENTS HAVE NOT BEEN GETTING THE INSTRUCTION THEY DESERVE. GRADUATE STUDENTS COULD BE EFFECTIVELY INVOLVED IN BRIDGING THE GAPS BETWEEN UNDERGRADUATES AND FACULTY BY ACTING AS COUNSELORS FOR UNDERGRADUATES, AS CRITICS AND EVALUATORS OF THE EDUCATIONAL PROCESS, AND AS MEMBERS OF UNIVERSITY COMMITTEES AND ADVISORY COUNCILS. (AF)

DARLENE ROTH
GEORGE WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY

Roth-1

GRADUATE STUDENTS AND ACADEMIC AFFAIRS

Since I am the only student on this panel, and since we are discussing the role of students as well as faculty in academic decision-making, it is a temptation to use this occasion to submit to you the proverbial list of demands and await your reaction. However, I do not like confrontations when I am outnumbered, so you will get no list of demands. Besides, several other things make such a stance difficult. I don't feel I can legitimately represent graduate students as a whole; I don't perceive any viable constituency there to represent. Further, I am only a half-breed. In addition to being a graduate student, for a number of years now I have been a member of the graduate dean's staff at my university. But my own situation is good proof of the testimony I wish to present. I have not had recourse to petitions, or pickets, or demonstrations to gain the influence sought by so many students today; I have simply infiltrated the ranks.

However, as I am the only student on this panel, I wish to restrict my remarks to the situation of the graduate student vis-a-vis academic affairs. My two loyalties -- as a student and as an administrative type -- give me something of a double vision here, a vision which I hope is more three-dimensional than astigmatic.

To begin with, whether graduate students should participate in the academic decision-making processes of the university is not a moot question, if it ever was. Their participation is not only desirable, it is necessary and inevitable. The events on campuses across the country since 1964 can only lead to this conclusion.

ED036259

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
OFFICE OF EDUCATION

THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL OFFICE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY.

HE 001 300

The student power movement has gathered momentum in the last half-decade, and it has been successful. It has led to new forms of student government, new kinds of student representation -- on campus committees, academic senates, even boards of trustees. Most importantly, it has led to curriculum reform -- on the undergraduate level particularly. That momentum has now reached the doors of the graduate schools. I do not mean to indicate that students alone can take the full responsibility, or blame, for these changes. It is difficult, though, to ignore the pressure they have applied to the academic structure, and it is ridiculous to deny a cause and effect relationship between that pressure and the current structural creaks and groans being heard across the nation. I do mean to indicate that the momentum which has been having its greatest effects on the undergraduate level is carrying over in to the graduate schools.

In some cases students now reaching graduate schools have had four years of experience, or training -- if you will, in dealings in academic power struggles. These students are not dismissing graduate education on grounds of irrelevancy. They are not all dropping out; hardly, they are flocking to graduate schools. You know, you've all looked at the growth figures. I am not specifically referring to hanger-on redicals who simply want to continue their activities in the various university undergrounds. Nor am I going to insist that there is some "silent majority" of students we just haven't heard from yet, but will. I am referring to the great

bulk of students whose consciousness of the institution of higher education iself has been awakened; all the ones who have been affected (or infected) by the so-called liberation activities. There are thousands of them. To them, graduate education has ceased to be a privilege for the few; like other things, it is being reckoned as a right -- the right for the many to have that advanced, specialized, and professional training in all fields, and the right to be awarded something besides a "worthless" degree. These students care; they want challenges; they want action; they want commitment. Most of all they want involvement in a community which is at least partially their own creation.

The popular contentions will remain. The issue-oriented social conscience of today's students cannot be expected to dissipate soon. Nor can it ever be expected to dissipate merely by association with the wormy books, the tradition-ridden hurdles, and the elusive professors for which graduate education is so noted. These students will continue to argue that the university should take a stand on Viet Nam, foster civil rights, that is should repair the ghettoes and eliminate urban blight, allow pot, and so on. This social fervor will find fertile soil in graduate education for gutsy academic argulments. The nature of graduate education itself will provoke them. The movement, if it can be called that, is insisting on new criteria for educational professionalism itself. It pits a new numbers game against the old one. You know the old one; it counts publications and professional society memberships

to rank its participants. The new numbers game simply counts people. It talks about the quality of teachin, about service to school and community, and about something which might be termed colleague-ship between faculty and students. This is what the graduate schools must face: a new game and a new student body -- larger and more public spirited, with more activists, more representative from minority groups, more late bloomers, a great number of the middle level-C+-B- type of student, a few committed scholars, and a lot of stubborn kids. Students they are at any rate, who are severely critical, indeed, even unsympathetic with our little closed corporation.

I am talking about graduate students in particular and not students in general for the simple reason that graduate students are a breed apart. Theirs is a betweixt and between world. And, it's a weary world -- full of large demands and small rewards, where study goes on from dusk to dawn and seminars go from yawn to yawn. The graduate student is not a full-fledged member of the normal collegiate student body, certainly not of the faculty. If he is a teaching fellow, he has feet on both sides of the doorway. If he is employed outside, he suffers the debilitating effects of a dual existence and a conflict of interests. If not employed, he usually retreats as a library mouse, or advocates undergraduate causes. Personally suspended between the good ole, carefree days and the responsibilities of an unknown future, his lot has all the difficulties and all the irresolution of an eternal present. He is not his own master. Normally, he is timid and afraid to confront the powers

over him. Of course. At the mercy of the academic department, he seldom will wish to complicate his life or endanger his academic existency by intimidation or distrust. He is bored and discontented, and his boredom and discontent make him part of the most potentially explosive group on campus.

Thank goodness, the situation is changing. The revitalization of graduate student organizations, for example, is correcting some of the apathy. Unionization even is occurring on some campuses. These groups are increasing communication and concern among the student. Afterall, associationalism is a fine old American tradition to build community. It hasn't been too successful in the past among graduate students, but it remains to be seen how the current wave will turn out. Although most graduate student groups -- departmental or otherwise -- lie outside the organizational structure of the university, they do help to ease the difficulties of a nonentity existence. There would be further success in abating discontent if more graduate students were brought within the regular channels of activity. By associating the students closer to iself, the university could take a sizeable step toward correcting student ignorance and diverting student antipathy.

The trouble on the graduate level -- as at all levels really -- is that a graduate school operates in a system of perpetual divisiveness. I am referring of course to the compartmentalization of subjects and specializations. The departmental structure is so

central to graduate education that no student -- unless blessed by an enormous curiosity -- ever gets a whole picture of the institution to which he belongs. The faculty don't have that picture, so how could the students? A worse offense is that the students are seldom taught anything about the relationship of their own field to other fields. One suspects this is because the faculty don't themselves know what the relationships are. I hate to think that fragmentation and narrowness can only beget the children of themselves and that generations of academics will be doomed to mutual unintelligibility.

There is this undeniable and serious educational void, and it is created by the faculty. I am not going to dredge up that old, tired argument about teaching and research. There is no debate. Research has taken precedence. The entire academic reward system promotes this, and I've never heard anyone deny it. With regard to research, consulting, whatever the activity -- suffice it to say that what time the faculty spend doing one thing it obviously cannot spend doing something else. The manifestations of this problem are all too faciliar. Classes are taught with minimal, sometimes no preparation; office hours are few or are missed altogether; theses get prepared with little direction and only cursory review. And so on and so on and so on. Students, with too few exceptions, are not getting the instruction they have paid for and have a right to expect. Under any concept of university this is an injustice.

The scholastic tradition reingorced by professional associationalism has had several unhappy consequences. As I have mentioned, the main job of the university, that is, teaching, has suffered severely. An academic league has been created whose members hold loyalties to everything but the home university, sometimes, I would say, to everything but higher education as a whole. The university -- to an embarrassing extent -- has lost the allegiance of its major constituency and erstwhile governming body. And the great advances in knowledge made by that same body have been turned outward and have yet to be applied to higher education. Only now is the university the serious subject of its own study.

I am not about to suggest that graduate students fill that void. They shouldn't; they can't. But I do have a few suggestions as to how graduate students could be used to breach some gaps.

Graduate students are a natural bridge -- in age and in experience -- between the undergraduates and the faculty. As such, they make excellent undergraduate counselors. I have seen a system at one university where all freshmen and sophomores are academically advised by a network or graduate counselors. It's a paying position, like a fellowship. The students love it, the deans love it, and it works beautifully -- almost entirely without problems. More of this kind of thing should be done. Counseling is one of those para-academic jobs that grows as the university grows. The faculty can't do it alone.

This is an obvious function, and so is the next one I

wish to mention -- criticism. Graduate students are highly critical, but they usually never open their mouths about academic matters or university affairs until after they graduate or drop out or until after they receive their first request for donations. New generations of students will doubtless not remain so quiet and passive, and channels for their criticism should be created. The graduate students should be used for effective evalustions; at the moment most are not. In fact, they are not really required to think critically of the whole educational process -- its framework, its history, its personnel, or its goals. Many steps in this direction could be taken, and it will be the chief job of the graduate dean to lead the march. He is already the arbiter between graduate students and faculty and there is no reason to suspect that this function will not increase. He may, in fact, end up as a super-ombudsman for graduate student affairs Other things could be done. Graduate students could serve on established university committees; they could serve on advisory councils under departmental or deans' jurisdiction. They could be hired for other posts besides teaching and cleaning test-tubes -- as administrative aides to departments or in other offices on campus. Curriculum and admissions committees, generally speaking, could use the point of view, not to mention the man hours graduate students could contribute.

This kind of involvement is particularly important for those students who plan to teach. They should be prepared to teach --

trimmings not often enough available should be available to them -- supervision, curriculum planning, and participation in departmental activities. A good many graduate students are future faculty members; they are not just temporary, cheap labor.

The few simple things I have described are not really new or avant-garde ideas. Universities across the country are experimenting with just such activities. Most experiments, however, are still in their infancy. Moreover, some are marked by haphazard planning and have all the appearances of academic "happenings" rather than programs.

It has often been said that the real test of an institution lies in its ability to meet and incorporate change. Higher education is no exception. Despite the present mobility of faculty, the students are still the major transient faction at a university. They bring change with them, and they keep it coming. Their turnover fosters new ideas much more quickly than they might otherwise appear. Why must universities wail for pressure from the outside to react to things the students have been saying for years? And why can't students be recognized for and responsibly charged within the institutions with a function that is so automatically theirs. The only answer to that, and it's a damning one to my mind, is fear.

One final comment. According to a simple law of physics, sufficient pressure applied to any substance will alter that substance -- perhaps unrecognizably. The parallel here is clear.

Roth
10

During the 1960's education has become everybody's business, and everybody is exerting overt pressure. We can sit back and watch the structure change, or we can exert our own efforts to direct the course of that change. The university <u>will</u> change -- with, or without our help.

Darlene Roth
December 1969